

JUN 26 1961

Approved For Release 1999/09/17 : CIA-RDP75-00149R

DEAR EDITOR

DRAPER

I have read Theodore Draper's two supplements on Cuba ("Castro's Cuba: A Revolution Betrayed?" NL March 27; and "Cuba and U.S. Policy," NL June 5) with great interest. They are extremely able and informative, and they impress me as the work of a man who is really trying to find out the truth. In a very complex situation involving violent emotions, I was one of the signers of the "Open Letter to President Kennedy" to which he alludes in the footnote on page 32 of the second supplement, and would like to make the following comments:

Let me first state my own fundamental attitude briefly. The United States is in great and unparalleled danger of military disaster; this danger is none the less because it is shared by every other country in the world. In the intercontinental missile era, the overthrow of Castro's Cuba would leave our major dangers essentially untouched (I assume, to simplify the argument, that the Russians would let us overthrow Castro if we decided to do so and would confine themselves to vigorous denunciations of our policy—in short that they would act much as we acted when they invaded Hungary in 1956).

It has been basic to our policy that we do not launch military attacks against other nations, especially small nations. Moreover, as a member of the United Nations, we are pledged not to do so, but to settle our disputes otherwise. I, for one, take that pledge seriously. The invasion managed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) violated that pledge in a clumsy and half-hearted fashion; a full-fledged invasion by U.S. troops would have violated it grossly and disastrously. There was certainly pressure for such an attack from some influential people outside the Administration, and possibly from within it, after the invasion attempt failed.

I believe that such action would have been catastrophic for the future of American foreign policy, betraying the things we ought to stand for. I believe it is central in our aims to support the free nations of the world in their attempts to free themselves of the kind of non-Communist rule that Castro originally proclaimed and has betrayed, as Draper and others have indicated. To achieve leadership in that aim, we must keep the confidence of the uncommitted nations of the world; and that confidence would be shaken or destroyed for years to come if we were to go in for such military adventures.

We have only a very imperfect beginning of the opportunities for leading such economic developments; and the Kennedys have been torn from the Cuban

episode, has shown a more encouraging awareness of the opportunities, and more eagerness to grasp them, than any of his predecessors. The setback that these prospects suffered from the Cuban episode was all the more alarming to many of us. What animated me, as a signer of the statement on Cuba, was certainly no tenderness for Castro, but a concern for the standing of the U.S. in the world.

As one signer of the statement, I would now wish, after further consideration, to revise certain parts of it or preferably simply to omit them. I would accept Draper's view that Castro's progressive shift over to the Communist camp had very little to do with U.S. policy toward him; we have made our mistakes, but they probably had little to do with the evolution of Castro's dictatorship. Our really grave mistakes in Cuba were made before Castro came to power; they go back quite a way into the past, and will doubtless plague us for years to come. But I do not think we need reproach ourselves with the idea that it was we who pushed Castro into the arms of the Communists.

I would be inclined to believe that the chance of serious negotiations at present between Castro and the United States is very nearly nil. However, I do not think it helpful to our influence in the world to brush off proposals for negotiation in casual fashion. Indeed we are now negotiating with Castro in a rather unusual fashion—but with the full approval of the President, over the exchange of prisoners for hostages.

If I had been a professor in Cuba at the time when Castro came to power, I would by this time in all probability be in jail, in exile, or dead; this assumes that I would have somehow survived the Castro regime. I certainly do not wish to condone or palliate the outrages committed by the present Cuban government. However, I am a citizen of the United States, and I must think of all these matters in the light of our worldwide responsibilities and opportunities. In terms of the total situation I believe that the Government would be making a disastrous mistake in contemplating military intervention in Cuba at this time, or in giving any official support to the Cuban exiles, however sympathetic the many people may be toward them.

I do believe, as the statement on Cuba indicated, that the major threat from Castro is as a center for subversion in other parts of Latin America. We must certainly cooperate actively and vigorously with the other Latin American Republics in meeting this danger, and especially in promoting the kind of economic reform that is the greatest need of people there.

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